



# Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

## Maryland Parole Commission

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CHAIRPERSON

February 9, 2004

The Honorable James E. DeGrange, Sr.  
Chair, Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee  
James Senate Office Building  
Room 120  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: Response to the Legislative Analysis – Maryland Parole Commission

Dear Senator DeGrange:

This letter is presented in response to issues in the analysis of the Maryland Parole Commission's Operating Budget Analysis.

**Issue: The Commission should be prepared to discuss the need for additional commissioners while the caseload is declining.**

The Commission explained at the last session of our need for two additional Commissioners. At that time we discussed an anticipated increase of 2% in our caseload activity based on several factors, increasing visiting days for victims from bi-weekly to weekly, including additional Open Parole Hearings, new early eligibility programs, and the continuing efficiency in processing warrants. Please note that the Commission has achieved these goals but it is not reflected in the analyst's assessment due to an error in reporting our Management for Results (MFR) caseload data that was submitted. The correct figures are:

	Actual <u>2003</u>	Est. <u>2004</u>	Est. <u>2005</u>
Inmates heard by the Commission:	12,761	13,016	13,277

Based upon this revision, the number of inmate cases heard by the Commission has increased by 10.2 % from 2002 to 2003 and 0.40% from 2001 to 2003. In addition, the analyst stated that since 1995 our caseload has declined by approximately 3,500 cases, or 27.1%. It should be noted that in years 1995 and 1996 the Commission included all administrative functions in the hearings total, which caused these figures to appear artificially high, compared to the later years. In subsequent years, the hearings data collection methods were changed to distinguish the types of hearings being conducted. In addition, this change provided a more accurate assessment for reporting our workload measures. The Commission has shown a pattern of increase in caseload in most years since fiscal year 1997 and if staffing can be maintained at its current level this pattern should continue.

**Recommended Action: Increase turnover expectancy to 6% based on historical trends.**

The analyst noted that the Commission had five (5) vacancies as of 12/31/03, which would reflect a 6.25% turnover rate. However, the Commission has obtained hiring freeze exceptions from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for three of these vacancies, and is currently recruiting to fill these positions. Funding to fill these vacancies is available based upon the existing 3% turnover rate in the fiscal year 2005 allowance.

The recommended increase in the budgeted turnover rate for fiscal year 2005 would preclude the Commission from filling these vacancies; the Commission would be forced to hold these positions open in order to meet the budgeted turnover rate, thus causing a serious impact on our operations and the public's safety. For example, one of these vacant positions is located in our warrant-processing unit. This unit consists of four (4) staff including the one vacancy, they are responsible for processing 9,000 special requests that resulted in 3,873 warrants to issued in fiscal year 2003. As noted by the analyst, the Commission has improved its retake warrant procedures so that 20% are processed within one business day.

It is our goal to continue to improve that percentage but it can't be accomplish without adequate staffing. Therefore, we request that no changes be made to our current turnover rate of 2.9%.

As the Commission prepares to implement new pre-determined parole programs (MAPs), and now that we are conducting parole hearings 4 months in advance, we anticipate an increase in FY 2005 in total number of hearings as well as in actual parole releases. The initiation of this program will result in substantial bed day savings. We must maintain our "bare bones" staff in order to succeed with our expanded parole mission.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with an insight on the Commission and we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia K. Cushwa  
Chair, Maryland Parole Commission

C: Mary Ann Saar, Secretary, DPSCS  
G. Lawrence Franklin, Deputy Secretary, DPSCS  
Rhea Harris, Director of Legislative Affairs  
Diane Lucas, DBM Analyst  
William M. Honablew, Jr., DLS Analyst  
Susan Dooley, Director of Financial Services



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CHAIRPERSON

February 18, 2004

The Honorable Joan Cadden  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Public Safety and Administration  
Lowe House Office Building  
Room 213  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: Response to the Subcommittee's Request for Additional  
Information from Maryland Parole Commission at the FY 2005  
Budget Hearing

Dear Delegate Cadden:

This letter is presented in response to the Subcommittee's request for additional information at the budget hearing on February 11, 2004.

**Request: Provide recidivism statistics based on the method of release.**

- **32.3% of paroled offenders** returned to Departmental supervision (Department of Corrections (DOC) custody or probation supervision) for new offenses within three years of release from DOC.
- **47.1% of offenders released by mandatory** returned to Department supervision (DOC custody or probation supervision) for new offenses within three years of release from DOC.
- **62.5% of offenders released by expiration of sentence** returned to Departmental supervision (DOC custody or probation supervision) for new offenses within three years of release from DOC.

**Request: Provide mid-year totals for cases heard for FY 2004.**

For the period from July 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 the Commission has conducted **6,241** parole grant and revocation hearings. It should be noted that the two new Commissioners started with the Commission on October 1, 2003 and have been in training. They have both assumed a full workload of cases recently in early February 2004.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide you with this additional information and hope that it will be of some assistance. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Patricia K. Cushwa  
Chair, Maryland Parole Commission

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